

Montana Transportation Partnerships Meeting
September 7, 2005
Room 226 Department of Commerce Building
Helena, Montana

Members and Guests Present:

Bonnie Adee - Governor's Ombudsman; Carol Carpenter - TANF Program; Marlene Disburg - Department of Public Health and Human Services; Steve Earle - Mountain Line (by phone); Alexander Enders - RTC Rural; Bev Hardy - Living Independently Today and Tomorrow; Jim Helgeson - Great Falls Transit District; Lyn Hellegaard - Missoula Ravalli TMA; June Hermanson - North Central Independent Living; Phil Hohenlohe - Montana Advocacy Program; David Kack - Western Transportation Institute; Susan Kohler - Missoula Aging Service (by phone); Bob Maffit - Montana Independent Living Project; Mike Mayer - Summit Independent Living Center (by phone); Mary Milan -Consumer; Joanne Perkins - Summit Independent Living Center (by phone); Ed Robinson - Helena Area Transit Services; Services; Tom Steyaert - Montana Department of Transportation; Arlene Templer - Social Services Salish and Kootenai Tribes; Randy Velin - Montana Transit Association; Ramona Weber – Montana Council on Developmental Disabilities

The Chair, Deborah Swingley, was absent and Marlene Disburg opened the meeting at approximately 10:00 A. M.

Project Reports:

June Hermanson and Tom Steyaert gave an overview of the 511-211 one-stop proposal that would tie information on transportation services to the 211 human services information system. Integrating transportation information into a one-stop shop, and other information portals such as the Internet, 2-1-1 and/or 5-1-1 system will allow everyone in MT to have better access to transportation information and services. The one-stop committee has had one meeting and will be meeting soon to determine the scope of the project, which will be the basis of a Request for Proposals. Initial activity on the project will be in 6 to 9 months.

Joanne Perkins reported that the project has met goals for the Systems Change grant and Bitterroot Bus is increasing ridership.

Ridership was reported as:

Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	August (partial)
15	22	52	28	22	32	17	39

There has been no funding for the program identified to operate the bus beyond October. It was clarified that the bus would continue to run after October for an undetermined period of time, but at sometime the funds for running the bus would run out. The Ravalli TAC is working on a variety of community fundraising ideas, all of which would be time consuming. The next step is developing service between Hamilton and Missoula for the general public. There was discussion regarding travel training and

the difficulties of switching persons from a demand response system to a fixed route system.

Susan Kohler requested that the project be allowed to spend approximately \$3,000 of the current grant for advertising over a six to nine month period. This would help to increase public awareness and increase ridership and build public support for the bus. Joanne and Susan were optimistic that the bus would remain running during the 6 to 9 month advertising campaign. Marlene asked that they send the request by e-mail and the executive committee would review it.

The last transportation extravaganza was held and they played a short video (about 50 minutes) developed by the author of "Riding the Bus with My Sister". This film went over well and would be available through Mountain Line if others wanted to use it. Steve Earle will make the film available to the Partnership for the next meeting.

Ed Robinson reported on the East Valley route. Effective July 1, the transfer of the route from Rocky Mountain Development Council to the HATS was completed. This has increased the match for HATS and makes the East Valley route sustainable. They are now looking at transferring the Head Start services, which would help to increase the match even further. They are now providing consistent rides for one of the group homes.

This generated some discussion related to service to Lockwood by the Billings system. It was pointed out that the problem was that Lockwood is in the urban district of Billings, but the residents of Lockwood will not pass a mill levy to support services. A 5310 vehicle could provide service in Lockwood to seniors and persons with disabilities.

Arlene Templer reported on the Flathead Reservation transportation services. The services began with the voucher program funded through a grant from the Association of Programs for Independent Living (APRIL) awarded to Montana Transportation Partnership. The system is running near capacity, and even though the program provides service to the non-tribal members of the reservation, the tribal members have preference, as the tribe provides all the financial support of the system. The system is being staffed by additional duties assigned to a variety of established positions within the tribal human services systems. The drivers come from various work experience programs.

The TAC is working to try to develop a way to get match from the county to open the service to non-tribal members. The TAC is also working to develop more coordination with other providers in the area. Lyn Helegaard noted that the State does not have authority to make providers coordinate – making it more difficult to accomplish goals.

Mike Hermanson reported that the Partnerships, through the MSU-Billings contract, are contracting with all four of the Centers for Independent Living to do grassroots transportation development and coordination. The Center representatives reported on a variety of the activities conducted under the contracts. As part of these efforts, representatives from three of the Centers had staff receiving travel training. This will significantly increase the travel training resources in the state.

Mike also reported on the new Real Choice Systems Change grant, which if funded would provide funds to each of the Centers for Independent Living to have staff to work on transportation coordination at the grassroots level. It was pointed out that this proposal was developed as part of a package proposal the Department of Public Health and Human Services applied for. The other parts of the “package” were housing and quality assurance. Each part of the proposal focused on activities that would assist persons with disabilities and elderly to live in communities and to reduce the need for institutionalization of persons with disabilities and the elderly.

There also was discussion regarding the United We Ride funding. There had been no progress in submitting a proposal to utilize the funding that had been reserved for Montana under this initiative due to the inability to have a meeting to work out the process for applying for the funds.

Wrap Up Activities and Evaluation of Systems Change Projects:

David Kack reported on wrap up activities for the first Real Choice Systems Change grant. He is currently completing the evaluation portion of the project and a draft of the evaluation will be done soon. The primary finding was that having an active TAC with a variety of constituencies represented is a major factor in successful transportation coordination on the local level. David also reported on a plan to distribute funds to Helena and Hamilton for advertising and to support ridership. The funds to support ridership will go to the centers for independent living in each area to purchase bus tickets for new riders. David also reported on the opportunity for community teams to going to transportation planning sessions with support from Easter Seals.

There was a general discussion related to emergency services and transportation services for the elderly and persons with disability. It was decided to have a presentation on this at the next meeting.

Governor’s Office Ombudsman:

Bonnie Adee reported on transportation concerns that had been reported to the Governor’s Ombudsman. This office focuses on concerns of persons with psychological disabilities and their families. The major concerns related to Medicaid and the difficulties in getting funding for rides related to medical appointments authorized. One difficulty is getting authorization for a parent to accompany a child getting therapy out-of-state. She reported that transportation issues are not high volume concerns, but when they are reported they do have a high level of importance to the people involved. The low reimbursement rate for Medicaid transportation also is a concern. Following her report, discussion indicated there are difficulties for public transportation providers being able to become a Medicaid provider. It was also pointed out that having to deal with the difficulties of getting transportation leads consumers to put off getting needed care until more intense care is needed.

Coordinator Position:

June Hermanson reported on the transportation coordinator position in DPHHS. It should be released sometime this week and the announcement has been revised based on the input from the Statewide Independent Living Council.

Membership Review:

Marlene reported on membership identification. There has been some follow up to agencies that did not respond to the initial mailing requesting appointments and this has increased appointed members. However, there still are a number of constituencies that have not appointed a representative. Marlene urged members to think about potential representatives from the constituencies not represented. Marlene also pointed out that members should be considering nominations for officers before the next meeting for elections. Copies of the election procedure and nomination forms were part of the handouts for the meeting. There was discussion related to the current makeup of the Partnerships being heavily oriented towards disability organizations and consumers. Carol Carpenter asked to go on record noting that the one voice under the membership list for representation on poverty issues. There was also discussion related to a legislative member and it was pointed out that this constituency was left off the membership list because there was not funding to support travel for the legislator. It was also noted that members may represent more than one issue/concern, i.e. most persons with disabilities are impoverished. Support from the Governor's Office would help facilitate participation.

Motion: Arlene Templer/Ramona Weber

Members should seek out department heads, on approved membership list, they know, have contact with and offer names for appointment to the Partnership.

Passed

Transit Changes under SAFETEA-LU - Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act:

Tom Steyaert reported on the new transportation bill. The bill provides significant increases in funding for transit funds and some relief related to match. The 5311 program will be receiving an increase of over 200% over the time covered by the new bill and the match will move from 50/50 to about 46/54. The 5310 program received a modest increase and the match moved from 20/80 to about 13/87. There will be a new program called New Freedom that will focus on human services transportation. The guidelines are still vague on this. There will also be new program for tribes and the again the guidelines are vague. For the first time Montana will receive JARC funding, which supports job related commuter transportation. In the past, this was a competitive grant program and now it is a formula program, which means all states will get some money. In addition to lowering match requirements, the regulations have changed and some federal money will be eligible for match funds. The allowable funds will be from human services programs such as TANF. Again, the guidelines are vague at this time. There are also new requirements for community coordination plans for some of the programs, and again the guidelines are vague. There also will be a significant earmark

for buses and bus facilities. Also, of significance, Montana usually operates one year behind on federal funding, which means the new funding would not start until next fiscal year, but this allows more time to plan for the new programs and to prepare for the big increases in the 5311 program.

Wrap Up:

Options for the next meetings agenda include the film “Riding the Bus With My Sister, having a presentation on Medicaid transportation funding, a presentation on emergency transportation, and a continuing update on the transportation law.

Changes to the minutes were to change “by-laws” to “policies and procedures” and to clarify Tom Steyaert’s discussion on the one-stop. Bob Maffit moved that the minutes be approved with noted changes. There was a second. The motion passed.

The next meeting will be December 7.

The meeting was adjourned.